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ABSTRACT

Communication strategies used by German-Swedish bilinguals when they have lexical difficulty are discussed. Findings indicate that in a language test situation, when attention is focused on words rather than topic, face-saving over a lexical gap seems to be of great importance to the speaker. When a communication strategy has led to a noticeable failure, the speaker has three principal options: to proceed as before, admit the failure but dissociate himself from it, or conceal the failure and deceive the listener. For dissociation and deception there are certain markers that can help identify the two strategies. These markers can also help in determining whether or not the speaker has used a communication strategy, since they are strongly linked with conscious errors and other products that the speaker considers to be failed communication strategies for his lexical difficulties. (MSE)

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DECEPTION AND DISSOCIATION MARKERS AS INDICATORS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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DECEPTION AND DISSOCIATION MARKERS AS INDICATORS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present two categories of markers which indicate communication strategies for lexical difficulties or gaps. With the term strategy I refer to both achievement and avoidance strategies. As a hypothesis we might suggest that communication strategies follow universal principles, but differ in terms of percentage and proportions for each individual. Affecting factors are personality, age and level of proficiency (cf. Palmberg 1982:83), but situational context might also be of influence, as we will see below. The two categories – I have called them *deception markers* and *dissociating markers* – appear to be more frequent in the speech of language learners and foreign language speakers.

My material consisted of tape-recorded monologues on different topics, i.e. oral proficiency tests, either based on pictures or in the form of retold stories. The testees were first-term students from the Department of German at the University of Stockholm and 38 8-year old dominant bilingual children from the Deutsche Schule in Stockholm. The form of the test led to only acoustical elements being registered, and no facial behaviour or body language; nor were the testees able to use nonverbal speech or the appeal-for-assistance strategy to help themselves out of their difficulties. It also implied that I was able to concentrate on acoustical data.

The situation and the type of activity specifies the *possible goals* that the speaker will orientate himself towards, but does not predict which specific purpose/s/ will be involved or will dominate in each case. This, on the other hand, depends on the factors mentioned above (personality etc.). As regards our type of activity – a speaking test, for the adults in a foreign language, for the children in their second language – the main goals are

- to communicate/inform, to attend to the message
- to speak correctly, to attend to the form
- to talk fluently for a certain amount of time, to attend to the fluency
- to avoid showing/to disguise lexical gaps

It should be noted that all these goals, and especially the last one, contain elements of face-saving.

2. *The problem of identifying strategies*

A main problem when dealing with strategies is to find clues to identify them. Rolf Palmberg underlined that fact in his yesterday paper. One source of information, of course, is the *linguistic product*: the errors, the erratic, inadequate or vague expressions, and the unexpected paraphrases. The product can also consist of the different results of an avoidance strategy: noticeable simplifications, information gaps, unfinished sentences and abrupt shifts in topic. But as we know, a major difficulty of interpretation is to distinguish between products that result from achievement and avoidance strategies and those that have other explanations, such as the spontaneous slips of the tongue (or "slips of the brain", as Laver calls them 1970:73), fossilized errors, ordinary markers of informal speech, and individual selection between relevant and irrelevant information.

One solution is by the method of *introspection*, as Kaj Sjöholm pointed out in his paper yesterday, or of retrospective interviews (Tarone 1977).

In the following I shall present some *paralinguistic speech markers* that – as far as I know – have not been dealt with in the area of communication strategies. It is my opinion that they can offer another possible way of distinguishing between strategy and non-strategy.

The 6 examples below, taken from a picture test, may illustrate the problem. The target item to be communicated is 'ran away/escaped (from a Zoo or circus)'. In all the following examples /.../ means hesitation pause, colon lengthening of a vowel or syllable, and capital letters particular stress/force of articulation. Underscores refer to the target item in each case.

(1) auf dem zweiten bild /.../ sehe ich einn tiger, der ist /.../ /ə/ ich glaube von einem tiergarten geflohen /.../ /ə/ alle leute ...	hesitation —> correct choice
(2) die andere bild, es ist ganz intereSSANT, es ist eine tiger, die vom zoo aufgelaufen ist, und /.../ viele leute, sie, sie springen und /ə:/ und /ə/ werden /.../ ja /.../ sie springen weg, wenn sie die, die tiger sehen.	no hesitation ——> error
(3) da seh ich ein tiger, der ist von einem zirkus /.../ gekommen. die menschen haben angst.	hesitation—> simplification
(4) der tiger rennt. er ist von eine zoologische garten ge/.../ ja. und ein mädchen ...	hesitation ——> message abandonment
(5) und der tiger ist von einem zoologischen garten. er sieht böse aus /.../	no hesitation ——> selection (?)
(6) ein /.../ tiger lauft auf eine tante, (in a low voice, blurred:) əm (as before:) erschreckt wird, und ös kind wird auch erschreckt und lauft auf den vater sein schultern auf.	hesitation ——> selection (?)

Only one example allows of the sure interpretation that the testee does not know the word and uses a strategy: (4) is a clear case of message abandonment, confirmed by the preceding hesitation pause and the following filler word *ja*. The other examples are more or less ambiguous. Testee (1) obviously hesitates, but manages to find a correct expression. (2) seems to have no word-finding difficulties with this particular item – but with a following one, *ängstlich*. Her spontaneous product, however, is incorrect. The hesitation of student (3) might indicate that the very vague *gekommen* results from a reduction strategy. It is interesting to compare this probable reduction with the products in the last two examples. Neither of the two testees, both children, communicates the item. (5) leaves out 'run away', (6) 'from the Zoo/

circus' as well. Are these two examples also to be interpreted as message reduction strategies, or are they correct German, resulting from genuine selection between relevant and irrelevant information?

3. Hesitation phenomena as strategy markers

As is well known, hesitation may indicate the use of a strategy, or more likely a *hierarchy of strategies*, whose first goal is to gain time in order to decide and carry out the second goal. The latter consists in avoiding the lexical gap through some avoidance strategy or in filling it, either by deblocking memory or through an achievement strategy, choosing a stand-in word or paraphrase.

Hesitation phenomena are individual phenomena. Besides pauses, consisting of silence, they include various fillers of pauses as vocalisations (or "vocal dawdling" as Mary Ritchie Key calls them 1975:50), throat-clearing, laughing, slurring, repetitions, expressions like *I mean* etc., used to delay. We can postulate then that the different hesitation phenomena might be *strategy markers*, if we define marker as an item whose presence correlates with a certain category. (As markers generally are subconscious, we could call these elements *symptoms*, as John Lyons does 1977:108. In accordance with Trudgill and Giles 1979 I prefer the term *marker*, also because this term implies that it is possible to bring them to some level of consciousness.)

4. Gap hiding

Before discussing other features in speech that indicate communication strategies for lexical difficulties, we have to consider one of the decision points that Nils Erik Enkvist told us about in yesterday's paper, the point where the criteria are weighted and the strategy is decided on. Let us concentrate on one of the four goals listed for our type of activity, the speaking test. I have chosen the last one, the speakers's attitude towards the lexical gap, and I am going to look at it from the aspect of its intentionality. That means: how strong and/or how conscious is the speaker's purpose to hide the lexical gap? For the classification I have found Jens Allwood's three

categories of intentionality useful: *signal, exposition* and *indication* (1980).

The following 5 examples are taken from a retold story. The testees know the story before and they heard the target item *Tröddelladen* 'junk shop' once during the test.

(7)	er kaufte einen hauptmannsanzug in eine /.../ ach ich kann mich nicht das wort erinnern	no gap-hiding: metalinguistic signal of the gap
(8)	da kaufte er eine uniform in /.../ ein /.../ tja, geschäft wo man sehr alte sachen auf lager hatte	exposition of the gap (rather evident)
(9)	er kaufte eine alte uniform in /.../ /ə:/ einem geschäft	exposition of the gap (noticeable)
(10)	er kaufte einen militäranzug (lengthened:) i:n, in eine ladung mit alte kleiden und alte dingen	exposition of the gap (less noticeable)
(11)	er kaufte eine alte uniform in /.../ (louder, energetically:) und DA kaufte er eine alte uniform (more slowly, marked pronunciation:) und zog sie an	indication (message: I have no gap)

The first and last testee have chosen the strategy of message abandonment, but differ in their weighting of the face-saving criteria to conceal the lexical gap. (11) wants to hide the embarrassing fact from her listener, but (7) openly signals that she does not know the word. The three examples (8-10) are achievement strategies, (8) and (10) paraphrases and (9) a simplification. (For the classification of simplification as achievement strategy, see Stedje 1982:164.) These examples clearly show that "exposition" must be a category that permits degrees of more or less. The three students do not mind exposing their gaps, more or less obviously/intentionally, in contrast to (11), who evidently wants to deceive her listener. She deliberately manipulates her tone of voice, her speed and her stress in order to draw the attention from her lexical gap and conceal it. Her information to the listener is: The "message abandonement" you perhaps happened to hear does not exist.

5. Deception markers

Many features in language and paralanguage can be used in order to deceive. One of the first linguists to write about this fact was Harald Weinrich. In his book "Linguistik der Lüge" (1966) he describes the "Lügensignale" 'markers of lying', by which he means certain prosodic, semantic and extralingual elements that refer to the content of a text. I would like to postulate that you can lie not only concerning the semantic content but also with reference to the *form*, namely pretending that it is correct when it is not.

This way of lying is a strategy used in cases when the face-saving criterion "disguise lexical gaps" carries great weight and when a recently applied communication strategy has failed. I have chosen to call this phenomenon *deception strategy*. It is mostly used to disguise avoidance strategies, such as message abandonment, but in exceptional cases I have also found achievement strategies.

The examples below originate from the same picture test as (1-6). (13) is a student, the other three are children.

		Used prosodic components
(12)	Target item: haben (rather monotonously:) ... einen tiger. das rennt in wilder karriere durch diesen park, und die meisten leuten (very indistinctly:) mm grossen (distinctly and expressively:) ANGst vor diesen TIger, der in WILder karriEre rennt. (as before:) nur ein mädchen ...	stress/intensity
(13)	Target item: klettern 'climb' sie versuchen in die bäume zu /.../ (lengthened, accentuated:) A:ber ei:ne FRAU ...	length/intensity
(14)	Target item: gestikuliert 'gesticulated' da sind sie raufgesprungen und haben bloss /.../ /ehm/ (higher, somewhat	high pitch

	Used prosodic components
affected:) die HO:sen sind zerrissen, die SCHUhe sind zerrissen (more rapidly:) die HOsen und hemd sind AUCH zerrissen (in a hushed tone:) auch zerrissen	rhythm/speed
(15) Target item: för livet 'for their lives' ... klättrar alla upp i parken allså, å två barn dom springer /uh/ /.../ (indistinctly:) å ok å livet allt /häm/ (lower, almost whispering, very intensely:) å den där TANten där i den där HATTen HON har en blommig väst	low pitch intensity

Testee (12), a boy, speaks in a rather monotonous key. He has difficulties with the target item; perhaps he feels insecure about the verbal ending (hat or haben?). In his L1 the subject would be singular, in L2 it is plural. His first strategy is blurring, in order to disguise the stand-in word he is using. That is not enough, however, and so he needs a second strategy: he begins to talk distinctly, with expression and with a certain loudness. These prosodic elements are meant to inform the listener that he is now going to tell something more interesting than what he has just said. Thus the listener may forget what he has just heard. In a similar way the student (13) uses length and intensification in order to disguise a message abandonment through the force of her articulation, hoping that the listener will not notice the failure.

(14) is an interesting example. The girl tries to conceal an obvious message abandonment, using high pitch which, as we know, may be heard in excited speech. She does not succeed, however, because she somewhat overdoes the variety in intonation. Perhaps she notices this exaggeration herself, since she makes an effort to conceal that new failure through speeding up. Then, in a hushed voice, she repeats the last two words of the sentence – probably a sign of a certain embarrassment.

The preceding example illustrates that deception strategies are often more obvious in children's speech. (15) is another example that shows this. The testee, a boy, blurs his stand-in version of the target item, and then uses low pitch as a deception strategy. He also speaks very intensely and is almost

whispering, certainly aware of the fact that a whispering voice is generally used as a conventional signal of confidential or even conspiratorial interaction.

Thus the paralinguistic code of the language can be deliberately applied by a speaker, if he wants to draw the listener's attention from a certain item. The four preceding examples illustrate that almost all elements of expressive language can be used for the purpose of misleading the listener.

Deception markers can be rather difficult to detect. But once the listener has learnt to recognize them, he will be able to use them as clues for communication strategies, naturally together with the product, i.e. the preceding avoidance strategy.

6. *Dissociation markers*

More easy to identify, I think, is the second category of markers, which is also interlinked with a preceding, more or less failed strategy. The speaker is aware of his errors, his unsuccessful approximations to the target word or his message abandonments. In his weighting of criteria it is important to attend to the correct form. But generally the criterion "avoid showing lexical gaps" seems to carry less weight than in the cases where the speaker chooses a deception strategy: at the new decision point he doesn't primarily want to conceal his failure. Instead he dissociates himself from his own product, and that is why I have called these phenomena *dissociation markers*.

This category may be subdivided into those cases where the speaker shows his negative emotions towards the failure, and those where he pronounces his stand-in word in an ironic way. But sometimes there are no sharp limits between these two subcategories.

The markers of the *first subcategory* consist of various physiological acts like swallowing, sighing, laughter; of vocalisations and of intonational patterns, which all signal emotive expressions like anger, disgust, rejection, complaint, hopelessness and defaitism.

(16) Target item: wegjagen 'drive away'
sie versuchen die (lengthened, hesitating:) KU:H wegzubringen /hö hö/ embarrassed laughter

(17) die jungen wollen die kühe /.../ tja
/hn/ — emotional sound

(18) Target item: entfernen 'take away'
versprachen eine grosse belohnung für
den, der die ratten bort, weg (sigh) — sigh of despair
/.../ ein mann ...

(19) Target item: sich amüsierte 'amused
themselves', lustig 'funny'
... eine geschichte über die das ganze
deutschland /.../ sehr /.../ sehr /.../
ja man glaubte dass die geschichte war sehr — anger
/.../ froh (angrily:) ach! (as before:) es
handelt von ...

The hesitation of student (16) before the target item, in her case an approximation, indicates her difficulties with the word, which is then confirmed through the embarrassed laughter after her unsuccessful attempt. Example (17), spoken by a student, contains the paralinguistic sound hn, made by blowing air out through the nose in combination with a nasal. It is quite frequent among Swedish speakers, and may represent an emotion, from amusement to embarrassment or irritation. Here it seems to express that nothing more can be done about the missing target item – or the noticeable lexical gap? He cannot withdraw the sentence and he has given up finding a stand-in word. In example (19) the student struggles with her target item; she tries to gain time through different hesitation phenomena: pauses, repetitions and new starts. Nevertheless she fails and shows her anger by exclaiming ach!

The following three examples belong to the *second subcategory*. Testee (21) is a child, the two others are students.

(20) Target item: geblümtes Kleid 'flowered dress'
sie ist in eine /.../ /hn/ blumigen anzug — amused laughter
gekleidet

(21) Target item: wegjagen 'drive away'
die jungen /.../ (slightly lengthened,

somewhat accentuated:) SCHA:sen die kühe weg	ironic accentuation
(22) Target item: Kleid 'dress'	
und eine dame hat blumen an dem /e: hm: e:/ (language switch and demonstrative Swedish pronouncing:) "klänning" (as before:) und viele photographieren ...	demonstrative language switching

The amused laugher in example (20) is strongly related to *irony markers* in ordinary speech: blinking, clearing the throat, unctuous accentuation etc., which announce that the speaker really means the opposite of what he actually says. The preceding short laughter of this student tells the listener that something funny will follow and that she is deliberately going to use an incorrect expression. Example (21): in a similar way, an ironic accentuation usually informs us that the verbal and nonverbal acts are incongruent, which implies that the intonation is manipulated. It is used in order to give a clear indication of a change of meaning in the particular word. Speaker and listener agree about that. In this example the irony refers to the form; both speaker and listener know and agree that the form is not correct. Perhaps, as in example (20), they may both share a certain amusement at the stand-in word. In my opinion this ironic accentuation is a kind of *audible quotation marks*, which are used alone or together with hesitation phenomena or with the above-mentioned other dissociation markers, such as physical acts and vocalisations. I would also like to classify the demonstrative language switching, as in example (21), as such audible quotation marks.

Dissociating markers seem to be typical of foreign-language speakers, especially in test situations, but also of anyone to whom – for one reason or another – it is important not to show erroneous language behaviour, and also of those who are insecure about their language.

6. Conclusion

In a language test situation, when attention is focused upon the words rather than upon the topic, "face-saving" as regards the lexical gap appears to be of

great importance. In the examples above we have seen that the speaker comes to a new decision point, when a communication strategy has led to a noticeable failure. There are three principal ways to go:

- to proceed as before
- to admit the failure, more or less, but dissociate oneself from it
- to conceal the failure and thus deceive the listener

For the last two ways there are certain markers, the deception and the dissociation markers, which may help us to identify the two strategies. But in addition they can also help us to decide whether the speaker has used a communication strategy or not, since they are strongly interlinked with conscious errors and other products that the speaker considers as failed communication strategies for his lexical difficulties.

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